Highlights and Summary

This summary focuses on the population of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking registered students. Between 2006 and 2011, that population increased substantially, from 4,100 to 4,600. The number of incoming students has now exceeded the level reached in 2003, the year of the double cohort (about 4,400).

Survey response rates have always been respectable, usually well above 40%. In 2007 the survey was administered on-line for the first time, resulting in a substantial decline in response rate to an all-time low of 34%. As a result of that low rate, the survey was administered again in paper form in 2008, yielding a 10% increase to 44%. The survey was not administered between 2008 and 2011; for 2011 the response rate was 46%.

The survey instrument has undergone a major revision, with the deletion of some outdated items and the addition of new items, some changes in response choices, rewording of existing items and re-ordering of items to improve the survey flow. The frequency table (Table 2) reflects the order of the 2011 survey, and includes the comparators for 2006 and 2008, where possible. New items, or ones that can no longer be easily compared due to changes in response categories have been eliminated from the 2006 and 2008 responses.

Table 1 shows the percentages within the population and the survey on a range of demographic factors for the past 3 administrations of the paper survey (2006, 2008 and 2011). As in all previous years, there is an extremely close correspondence between population and respondent distributions on known factors. In addition, despite the elapse of 3 years between surveys, the 2011 survey findings have altered very little over previous years, suggesting that this year’s results are consistent with those of previous years.

Population Trends

These statistics are drawn from admission and registration records (not from the survey results), and reflect the overall population of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students. Demographic changes over the past 5 years have been minimal, although there have been some significant shifts in program choices. Comparisons are between the incoming classes of 2006 and 2011.

- Between F06 and F11, the proportion of new registrations increased in the BC and BENG programs and decreased in BA. All other degree programs have remained fairly constant.
- Proportion of new students in on-campus residence decreased by about 3%. The actual number of students in residence increased, but there was a larger increase in the overall population of incoming students resulting in a lower percentage of those in residence.
- Percent of students aged 18 and under has remained fairly constant at just over 75%. Age distribution in all age groups remained fairly stable.
- The campus now has approximately 3,500 students aged 18 or under.
- Guelph was first choice for about 58% of both 2006 and 2011 incoming students.
The percent of visa students has remained steady at approximately 1.4%. The actual number of visa students increased slightly from 60 in 2006 to 63 in 2011.

Percent of students with final admission averages of 80% or higher increased from 54% in 2006 to 64% in 2011.

Percent of students with final admission averages of 70% or lower decreased significantly from 10% in 2006 to 6% in 2011.

Survey Trends

Table 2 shows the distribution of the responses for each question, by year. This summary highlights some of the survey trends over recent years. It is worth noting that the population characteristics change very little from one year to the next; changes as trivial as 2% or 3% are often notable in a survey that sees virtually identical proportions year after year.

Background

The incoming population is predominantly white, although that percentage has decreased from 86% in 2006 to 82% in 2011. The difference appears to be in the “Mixed” category, which was listed for the first time in the 2011 survey. All other groups remained relatively stable, suggesting that those who categorized themselves as “Mixed” would previously have placed themselves in the “White” group.

As in previous years, respondents’ fathers are most often business managers, business owners, engineers and skilled trades workers.

Respondents’ mothers are most often business managers, nurses, school teachers and homemakers.

The percentage of first-generation students (neither parent attended any post-secondary institution for any length of time) was 9% in 2011, down from 12% in 2006.

Over the last 5 years, the percent of students whose parents were divorced or separated has remained constant at around 19% to 20%.

The percentage of students speaking a language other than English or French at home remained steady at 11%-12% over the past 5 years.

The percentage of students with disabilities in 2011 was 17%, a significant increase over past years in which just 9% of respondents reported that they had at least one disability.

In terms of specific disabilities, the percentage of respondents with sight-impairment doubled from 2.5% to almost 5%. There were 3 additional disabilities listed in the 2011 survey: attention deficit disorder, acquired brain injury and psychological.

On self-rating items, the trends over the years are fairly constant, with most students rating themselves in the average to above average range in most areas.

Asked how they ranked themselves compared to average students of the same age, respondents placed themselves the highest on drive to achieve, cooperativeness and the ability to work in groups. They rated themselves lowest on popularity, computer skills and spirituality.

Compared to other people of the same age, the majority of respondents ranked themselves as above average in all characteristics with the exception of: “Openness to having my own views challenged”.

The percentage of respondents who estimated their parents’ annual income was more than $150,000 was 15%, essentially unchanged from 2008. The percentage who estimated that their parents earned less than $50,000 decreased from 16% to 11%.
### Funding Sources for Education

- Percentage of respondents with major concerns about financing education decreased in 2011 to 11% from 14% in 2006.
- The survey questions focusing on first year funding sources and amounts were significantly changed from previous surveys, making year to year comparisons difficult.
- Parents were the most common source of financial support in 2011, providing at least some of the first year costs for 94% of respondents. 35% of respondents indicated that their parents would be providing over $10,000 in the first year.
- About 88% of students indicated that they would be at least partially funding their education using their own resources.
- Over half of respondents were planning to use loans to cover first year expenses.
- About 70% of respondents expected to receive some scholarship or bursary money, although for most the amount would be less than $1000.

### Applying to and Selecting a University

- The percentage of students applying to 4 or more universities has decreased, but remains fairly high (49% in 2011, compared to 53% in 2006).
- A lower percentage of respondents had made Guelph their first choice (74% compared to 82% in 2006). (Note that Guelph was first choice for 58% of the overall population.)
- Asked about their reasons for attending university, high percentages of respondents have consistently cited the following as “very important”: getting a better job, learning about their interests and gaining a general education. Low percentages cited as “very important”: parental pressure, getting away from home, and being unable to find a job.
- High percentages of respondents rated the following reasons for attending Guelph in particular “very important”: Guelph’s academic reputation, the attractive campus and the friendly atmosphere. These have been consistently the most important issues over the last few years.
- Low percentages found the following reasons for attending Guelph “very important”: commuting distance from home, athletic or academic recruitment by the university, advice from high school teacher or guidance counsellor, and suggestions of friends.
- Asked about specific concerns they had prior to starting at university, students indicated that the biggest worry was their ability to manage their time, cited by 71% of respondents. Concern about their academic ability was an issue for 57%, and the ability to handle stress an issue for 55%. 55% also indicated that they were concerned about their ability to understand what was expected of them academically.
- Respondents were not particularly concerned about possible exposure to situations involving drugs or alcohol, finding a place to live (most would have already found a place), and finding their way around campus.
- Given a list of 12 possible concerns, respondents identified an average of 5 issues. 6% of all respondents had no concerns at all.

### Expectations of University and Beyond

- Although 43% of respondents had average high school grades of 85% or higher, just 13% expected to achieve those levels at university.
- 22% expected that they would require extra tutoring in math, and 15% in science.
- Very few respondents had previously been tutored in English, science, language, writing or other subjects, but 23% had already been tutored in math before coming to university (about the same percentage who indicated they would need math tutoring while here).
- Over 75% of respondents planned to obtain a higher degree than a bachelor’s, anything from a master’s to medicine, veterinary medicine and law.
• Most of those planning higher degrees planned to obtain no higher than a bachelor’s degree at Guelph (72%).
• There were few shifts in respondents’ intended occupations. The most popular career plans are: veterinarian, physician, scientific researcher and school teacher.
• About 14% remained undecided about their career paths.
• As in previous years, respondents’ priorities for the future remain predominantly personal: getting married, having families, being financially well off, and helping others. There continues to be little interest in artistic accomplishment (writing, visual arts and entertainment), having political influence, making theoretical contributions to science, or participating in community action programs.
• Respondents indicated that there was little chance that they would: drop out either temporarily or permanently, work full-time while attending university, be voted into student office, transfer to another university before graduating, or take part in student demonstrations.
• Respondents thought there was a very good chance they would: socialize with people of different races, discuss course work with other students, and find work related to their majors.